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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

December 19, 2019

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Administrator Verma:

I write today to emphasize my opposition to Tennessee's block grant proposal. This proposal is both unlawful and unjust in the ways it would bring significant harm to the Tennesseans that are most in need of care. There remains no supporting evidence that this proposal would have a positive impact on Tennesseans nor that Tennessee is prepared to implement such sweeping change with propriety.

In the months since the block grant was proposed, Tennessee has demonstrated an inability to support its poorest citizens through the programs it currently manages. Through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, the state withheld millions of dollars from struggling Tennesseans. Not until this slush fund hoarding was brought to light did the state commit to properly distributing a portion of the funding.¹

The correlation between such mismanagement of federal funding makes it difficult to understand how granting the state more flexibility with federal Medicare dollars is good for Tennessee. Furthermore, TennCare operates under a 1115 demonstration project waiver. To waive specific sections of this law requires that the change be "likely to assist in the promotion of the objectives of Medicaid" -- otherwise known as providing medical assistance to eligible individuals.²

The state government has demonstrated what it will do without oversight, and Tennesseans have paid the cost of its negligence in both persistent poverty and gross mismanagement of taxpayer dollars. To approve the state's proposal would only further endorse its history of mismanagement and undermine the principles upon which Medicaid was founded. I again urge you to reject the proposal.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

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CIVIL LIBERTIES
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¹ Congressman Steve Cohen, *Congressman Cohen Applauds State Decision to Spend Down \$732 Million TANF Surplus*. November 19, 2019.

² Senate Committee on Finance, Statement of the American Hospital Association *Hearing to Consider the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson Proposal*, 115th Cong. (September 25, 2017). Social Security Act, Pub. L. No. 74-271: § 115.